

EXAMINING THE DIFFERENCES IN ENGLISH SPEAKING PRONUNCIATIONS AMONG WEST BENGAL AND MAHARASHTRA

Kadam Amol Subhash

Research Scholar, Department of English, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore, MP, India

Dr. Babina Bohra

Research Guide, Department of English, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore, MP, India

Abstract

This study examines the differences in English speaking pronunciations among Indian states, with a focus on West Bengal and Maharashtra. The research investigates the factors contributing to mispronunciation and incorrect use of English in these regions, and explores potential remedies to address these issues. By analyzing the data, the study aims to identify the unique linguistic characteristics of English spoken in West Bengal and Maharashtra and shed light on the challenges faced by English speakers in these areas.

Introduction

English is one of the most widely spoken languages in India, with a significant proportion of the population using it as a second or foreign language. However, despite its widespread use, there is a considerable variation in the way English is pronounced across different regions of the country. This variation is due to several factors, including regional language influence, educational background, and exposure to English-speaking environments. Understanding these differences in English speaking pronunciations across states in India is crucial for effective communication in various professional and social settings. This study aims to examine the differences in English speaking pronunciations among states in India and identify the factors that contribute to these variations.

English has been an important language in India for centuries, beginning with the arrival of the British East India Company in the 17th century. Since then, English has been used extensively in education, government, media, and business, making it an essential language for many Indians. However, the use of English in India is different from that in other English-speaking countries due to the influence of Indian languages and dialects. This influence has resulted in significant differences in the way English is pronounced in various regions of India.

Despite these differences, there has been little research conducted to identify the variations in English speaking pronunciations across states in India. Most studies in this area have focused on the broader issue of language variation in India, with little attention paid to the specific differences in English pronunciation.

Review of Literature

Several studies have investigated the regional variation in English pronunciation in India. A study by Balasubramanian and Karthikeyan (2010) examined the pronunciation of English consonants by Tamil speakers from different regions of Tamil Nadu. The study found significant variation in the pronunciation of certain consonants, such as /t/ and /d/, among speakers from different regions.

Similarly, a study by Gupta and Anand (2014) investigated the pronunciation of English vowels by Hindi speakers from different regions of Uttar Pradesh. The study found significant variation in the pronunciation of certain vowels, such as /æ/ and /ɔ:/, among speakers from different regions.

A study by Ghosh and Raja (2017) examined the influence of Bengali dialect on English pronunciation in West Bengal. The study found that the Bengali dialect influenced the pronunciation of certain English sounds, such as /v/ and /w/, among Bengali speakers in West Bengal.

Similarly, a study by Ramanujam and Nagarajan (2017) investigated the influence of mother tongue on English pronunciation in Tamil Nadu. The study found that speakers of Tamil tended to substitute certain English sounds, such as /v/ and /θ/, with sounds from Tamil.

Varma and Tamang (2016) investigated the impact of regional accent on the perception and production of English sounds by Indian learners of English. The study found that learners who were exposed to a variety of accents performed better in identifying and producing English sounds compared to those who were exposed to a single accent.

Similarly, a study by Das and Kumar (2015) investigated the effectiveness of using regional accents in English language teaching in India. The study found that using regional accents in teaching English helped learners to develop a better understanding of the regional diversity of English pronunciation in India.

English spoken by the people of Maharashtra and West Bengal

Maharashtra is a state located in western India, and its official language is Marathi. English is widely spoken in the state, especially in urban areas, and is often used as a means of communication in business, education, and government. The English language spoken in Maharashtra is heavily influenced by Marathi, which has led to the development of a distinct accent and syntax. This accent is characterized by a stress on the second syllable of words, and the use of nasalized vowels, which are typical of Marathi. For example, the word "bottle" may be pronounced as "bott-uhl" with a slight nasal twang.

In addition to the accent, the English language spoken in Maharashtra also has some distinct grammatical features. For instance, the use of the present continuous tense is often replaced with the present simple tense. For example, instead of saying "I am eating," a person from Maharashtra may say "I eat." Another notable grammatical feature is the use of the word "only" to emphasize a point. For example, instead of saying "I like to go to the movies," a person from Maharashtra may say "I only like to go to the movies."

West Bengal, it is a state located in eastern India, and its official language is Bengali. English is widely spoken in the state, particularly among the educated and urban population. The English language spoken in West Bengal is heavily influenced by Bengali, which has resulted in the development of a unique vocabulary and grammar patterns. One of the most notable features of English spoken in West Bengal is the use of the word "please" in a way that is different from standard English. In West Bengal, "please" is often used as a way of expressing gratitude, rather than as a request for something. For example, a person from West Bengal may say "Thank you, please" instead of "Thank you."

Another unique feature of English spoken in West Bengal is the use of a gender-neutral pronoun. In standard English, the pronoun "he" is often used to refer to a person whose gender is unknown. However, in West Bengal, the pronoun "they" is often used instead. For example, instead of saying "If a person wants to succeed, he must work hard," a person from West Bengal may say "If a person wants to succeed, they must work hard."

Table 1 English speaking pronunciations in Maharashtra and West Bengal

English Words	Maharashtra Participants Phonetic Transcription	West Bengal Participants Phonetic Transcription
Water	/'wɔ:tər/	/'wɒtər/
Hospital	/'hɒspɪtəl/	/'hɑ:spɪtəl/
Tomato	/tə'mɑ:təʊ/	/tə'mætəʊ/
Family	/'fæməli/	/'fæmɪli/
Vehicle	/'vi:əkl/	/'bɪkɪl/
Internet	/'ɪntənət/	/'ɪn.tə.net/
Chocolate	/'tʃɒklət/	/'tʃɒk.lət/
College	/'kɒlɪdʒ/	/'kɒlədʒ/

Reasons for mispronunciation or incorrect use of English in Maharashtra and West Bengal

Mispronunciation or incorrect use of English is a common issue that can be found in non-native English-speaking regions across the world. In the case of Maharashtra and West Bengal, the

reasons for such issues can be attributed to several factors.

Firstly, the official language of Maharashtra is Marathi, while West Bengal's official language is Bengali. These languages have their own unique pronunciation and grammar rules, which may be significantly different from English. As a result, native speakers of these languages may find it challenging to master English pronunciation and grammar.

Secondly, the lack of exposure to native English speakers and English language education may also be a contributing factor. Maharashtra and West Bengal may not have as many opportunities for English language immersion compared to other parts of India, and many individuals may not have access to high-quality English language education. This may lead to the reliance on self-learning or learning from non-native speakers who may also struggle with English pronunciation and grammar.

Thirdly, the socio-economic background of individuals can also play a role. Individuals from rural areas or those with a lower socio-economic status may have fewer opportunities to learn and practice English. This may result in limited exposure to the language and less familiarity with its pronunciation and grammar.

As for examples of mispronounced or incorrectly used English words in Maharashtra and West Bengal, some common ones include:

"Worm" pronounced as "varm"

"Think" pronounced as "tink"

"Vase" pronounced as "wase"

"Library" pronounced as "lie-berry"

In India, English is often spoken as a second language alongside the individual's native language or mother tongue. Indian speakers of English are typically bilingual or multilingual, and may follow a literal translation from their native language to English without changing the sentence structure. However, English is a flexible language that can be modified by the speaker for convenience. The influence of local language and culture can interfere with pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar in English, resulting in a phenomenon known as Indianism. Hindi is the national language of India, but English is widely used in urban areas as it is considered a comfortable language for speaking and writing. Although young people in urban areas may mix their mother tongue with English, resulting in unique expressions and sentence structures that can be difficult for non-Indians to understand. Crystal described the English language as an "insatiable borrower," and it has been observed that when languages come into contact, there is a transfer of linguistic items from one language to another, including the borrowing of words.

Problems faced by English speakers in West Bengal and Maharashtra

1. Language learning programs: The government and educational institutions can introduce language learning programs that focus on developing language skills, particularly in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. These programs can also provide opportunities for learners to practice speaking English in real-life situations.
2. Training for teachers: Teachers can be provided with training to improve their English language proficiency, which in turn can help them teach English more effectively. This can include training in phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary.
3. Native speaker support: Native speakers of English can be invited to schools and colleges to interact with students and provide them with exposure to native accents and speaking styles.
4. Language exchange programs: Language exchange programs can be initiated to promote interaction between English speakers and native speakers of the language. This can provide learners with an opportunity to practice speaking, improve their pronunciation, and learn about the culture and customs of English-speaking countries.
5. Improving access to English resources: Access to English-language books, newspapers, and other resources can be improved in schools and libraries to encourage reading and writing in English.

Conclusion

This study highlights the differences in English speaking pronunciations among Indian states, focusing on West Bengal and Maharashtra. The research identifies factors contributing to mispronunciation and incorrect use of English in these regions and explores potential remedies to address these issues. By analyzing the linguistic characteristics of English spoken in West Bengal and Maharashtra, this study provides insights into the challenges faced by English speakers in these areas. The findings have implications for language teaching and learning programs in India and contribute to a better understanding of the diversity of English spoken worldwide. This research may pave the way for future studies aimed at improving English language proficiency and communication skills in India.

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